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LETTER DATED 24 OCTOBER 1983 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVES OF ANGOLA, CAPE VERDE, GUINEA-BISSAU, MOZAMBIQUE AND SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

We, the Permanent Representatives of the People's Republic of Angola, the Republic of Cape Verde, the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, the People's Republic of Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, acting upon instructions of our respective Governments, have the honour to forward herewith the following:

(a) A letter from Mr. José Luis Guterres, member of the Central Committee of FRETILIN;

(b) Excerpts of an interview given by Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopes, former Apostolic Administrator of East Timor, to a London-based human rights organization;

(c) Excerpts of a report on the human rights and social and humanitarian situation in East Timor prepared and made public by the Revolutionary Council of National Resistance (RCNR), FRETILIN highest political and military body based in the liberated area of East Timor.

In view of the gravity of the situation in East Timor and the importance of the above-mentioned documents, we would highly appreciate it if they could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Elisio de FIGUEIREDO
Permanent Representative of Angola
to the United Nations

(Signed) Amaro Alexandre da LUZ
Permanent Representative of Cape Verde
to the United Nations

(Signed) Inácio SEMEDO, Jr.
Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau
to the United Nations

(Signed) Manuel DOS SANTOS
Permanent Representative of Mozambique
to the United Nations

(Signed) Adriano CASSANDRA
Chargé d'Affaires of the Permanent Mission
of Sao Tome and Principe
to the United Nations

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Annex I

Letter dated 20 October 1983 from Mr. José Luis Guterres addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have been instructed by H.E. José Alexandre Gusmao, National Political Commissar of the Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente (FRETILIN) and Commander-in-chief of the Forcas Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste (FALINTIL) to transmit to you additional information concerning the situation in East Timor.

1. As it has been widely publicized, a major Indonesian military offensive is now under way against the people of East Timor. This operation involves about 20,000 troops. Details of this offensive were transmitted to the Security Council on 7 October 1983 and are contained in Security Council document S/16034, dated 11 October 1983.

2. The situation in East Timor at this present time is extremely grave. Hundreds of innocent women, men and children have been summarily executed by the Indonesian troops. Many hundreds have been detained. The fragile agriculture sector has been completely disrupted, and an acute food shortage is already being felt through the territory. Thousands of people will perish in the next few months. In the district of Lospalos, 50 women, children and the elderly were taken into an army truck and driven to the outskirts of the town in the middle of the night. Their bodies were found several days later riddled with bullet holes. In Baucau, the second largest town, six young men were forced out of the local hospital, where they had been interned for tuberculosis, and were shot in the market place. Scenes like this have been occurring daily throughout East Timor since the current Indonesian army offensive began two months ago.

3. While the Permanent Mission of Indonesia attempts to cast doubts about the accuracy of the FRETILIN reports on the current situation in East Timor, it is the Indonesian puppet "Governor" in the "province", Mr. Mario Carrascalao, who publicly spoke about the said military operation. According to a dispatch by UPI of 17 October 1983, Mr. Carrascalao told the Indonesian daily Sinar Harapan that "an operation by the Indonesian military aimed at wiping out hundreds of nationalist rebels on the Indonesian island will be completed in several months".

4. The Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations said, in his exercise of the right of reply during the general debate of the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly on 14 October 1983: "Based on facts rather than fiction ... I can categorically state that the ICRC is continuing its various programs in East Timor and on Atauro island". The international community must be appalled at this outright lie by the Permanent Representative of a Member State. In its Situation Report No. 10 of September 1983, the Geneva-based humanitarian institution said:

> "It has not been possible to provide the intended assistance on the main island as set out in section 7 of the previous report (No. 9). The ICRC delegates could not have access to all the villages where the evaluation of

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requirements would have had to be made for the purpose of subsequent distribution of aid. Being unable to apply usual International Red Cross criteria for the provision of aid, ICRC decided, in July 1983, to suspend its participation in the assistance activities on the main island. ICRC is prepared to resume its assistance on the main island at any time, provided that its delegates are granted access to all persons requiring such aid. The Indonesian authorities have stated that this access will again be granted at a later stage".

5. In a more recent "Up-date on ICRC activities in East Timor", dated 18 October 1983, ICRC again informed the donor countries that it had ceased its activities in East Timor as of July of this year, with the exception of the off-shore island of Atauro.

6. The Permanent Representative of Indonesia contradicts himself in the very same statement before the General Assembly when he admits that "a temporary suspension is in force only with regard to relief operations on the mainland, due to recent security disturbances".

7. The Permanent Representative of Indonesia wants the international community to believe that "security disturbances" in one particular region should be reason enough to impose "a temporary suspension" in the entire territory.

8. The truth of the matter is that a large-scale Indonesian military offensive is under way and the Indonesian authorities found it necessary to "suspend temporarily" the ICRC presence in East Timor. ICRC will be readmitted only when the current military offensive is terminated in "several months", as the Indonesian puppet "Governor", Mr. Mario Carrascalao, stated in an interview for the Indonesian daily, Sinar Harapan.

9. The Revolutionary Council of National Resistance (RCNR) will keep the Security Council informed about the development in East Timor as it deems necessary.

(Signed) José Luis GUTERRES
Member of the Central Committee
of FRETILIN

Annex II

Interview with former Bishop of East Timor

Monsignor Martinho da Costa Lopes was the Apostolic Administrator of East Timor from 1977 till 1983. In May this year, he was persuaded to resign. He then decided to leave East Timor. After spending a few weeks in the Vatican to report on the situation, he went to Portugal, having refused a post offered to him in Rome. In September, he visited London, Dublin, Paris and Holland and met many groups, spoke to parliamentarians, gave press conferences and met government representatives. While in London, he gave the following interview.

What were your personal experiences of the Indonesian invasion in 1975?

When the Indonesians invaded, this was the start of a period of massacres, torture, capturing people, arresting any suspect in the middle of the night. Many people were killed, right from the very first day of the invasion. They were terrible times.

Were you in Dili on the day of the invasion?

Yes, I was. And from the very start, I was deeply concerned with everything that was happening.

I think we can divide the war since 1975 into three periods: the first was from 1975 till 1979, the second was from 1979 till 1982 and the third is the present period. The first period was characterized by horrifying massacres, tortures, mass arrests. We try not to remember the things that happened in those days, because it is all just too painful. So many people were killed. The second period was characterized by what we call the Timorization of the war. The Indonesian military, probably because they were not able to fight against FRETILIN and because they lost so many soldiers, started to select young Timorese men, took them to Bali for military training, then brought them back to Timor and made them fight against FRETILIN. So, in the first period, the war was between Indonesians and Timorese; but now it was between Timorese and Timorese. The Timorese soldiers were put in two special battalions, Battalions 744 and 745, and also in Hansip (the civil guard).

The third period started from the cease-fire. The first approaches were made in 1982, but the cease-fire actually started in March 1983. I watched this with great interest, hoping it would lead to a dialogue between FRETILIN and Indonesia; but as we now know, the dialogue was not continued, and the cease-fire has been broken. The Indonesian military have launched a new, big offensive.

With this new offensive, I am very afraid for the fate of the civilian population, the defenceless people, women and children, the old and the sick. I don't fear for the FRETILIN, because they have so much experience of fighting and plenty of weapons; I am quite certain they will be able to resist this offensive. But the civilians are the ones who will suffer. I think it is extremely important

for all humanitarian organizations and solidarity groups, as well as Catholic organizations like the commissions for justice and peace, and foreign Governments, to be made aware of this new invasion. They must do something to stop the bloodshed that will occur, do something to alleviate the terrible sufferings of the people of East Timor.

What was the attitude of the Catholic Church at the time of the invasion?

At first, the Church was powerless to do anything. We had no idea what would happen. Everybody in Dili stayed at home because they were so terrified of the Indonesian soldiers. Many people were killed. I know myself how the soldiers forced Timorese people whose house may have had a FRETILIN flag, to come out of the house; then all these people were killed by the soldiers.

Did the former Bishop try to protest and protect the people?

At that time, it was absolutely impossible to do anything. All we could see were the soldiers, killing, killing, killing. No one dared to go and talk to the Indonesians. We had no idea what kind of people they were. The Timorese were just too afraid to do anything.

I remember the first day when the Indonesian troops landed in Dili. Many Indonesian paratroops dropped from the sky. And as they fell, pop ... pop ... pop ... many were shot dead. The soldiers who landed started killing everyone they could find. There were many dead bodies in the streets. I was with the Bishop, and some people came running to the house to tell us there were many wounded people. We decided to take them to hospital. But there were Indonesian soldiers in the streets. The hospital was about 5 km away, and it was very dangerous to drive through the streets. When we went out and met some Indonesian soldiers, we showed by gestures that we wanted to take the wounded to hospital, so they replied: "Commandant, commandant", pointing to where we should go to meet their commander. The Bishop and I went to the commandant to ask for permission to drive to the hospital. We took two young Timorese to help us carry and look after the wounded. The commander (he could speak English) said that the Bishop and I could go to the hospital but the two young boys would have to stay behind. This made us very sad; these boys were afraid of what would happen to them when we left. But the commander refused to listen to our plea that the boys be allowed to go with us. We didn't dare leave them there alone. So the Bishop said to me: "You go with the wounded" (I was driving the vehicle) "and I will stay here with the boys." I felt very afraid, driving alone like that, but I drove off, with some wounded people in the back of the car.

On the way, I met many FRETILIN fighters. They knew me and asked me where I was going. "To the hospital", I said. They told me to be careful, because there were many people fighting. I drove as fast as I could, not stopping to look at anything. At the hospital, I asked the nurses to take the wounded people as quickly as possible, then drove straight back to where the commander was. He asked me what I had seen on the way. I told him there were FRETILIN people everywhere and he should beware.

The Bishop was still there, sitting and praying with his rosary, in a corner. By this time it was about 12 noon, and the Indonesian soldiers were taking out their lunch tins. So I said to the commander: "Your soldiers are eating lunch. We are hungry too, and we want to go home and have our lunch." The commander replied "Okay, you and the Bishop can go home, but the two boys must stay."

When the boys heard this, they said: "Please, Father, don't leave us here. We are afraid they will kill us." And I was very afraid for them too. So I said to the commander: "We arrived as four people, and there must be four of us when we go home. I refuse to leave two people here. If anyone is to be killed, it is better that we are all killed, all four of us. We two can't go home and leave the two boys here. We refuse to do that."

After a lot of talking, the commander finally agreed that we could all leave. We had been terribly afraid of what might happen. The streets were full of dead people, dead Timorese and dead Javanese. I had never seen anything like it. Unbelievable. Death everywhere. I thought my own time had come, too, but apparently it was not God's will, and I survived.

How did the former Bishop of Dili, your predecessor, Bishop Ribeiro, cope?

Oh, poor man, he could not cope at all. The whole situation was more than he could bear. All he did was cry - cry every time he heard about what the Indonesians were going. He just cried and cried.

During the first years of resistance, were you able to keep in contact with the fighting in the resistance?

No, that was impossible. All of us in the towns were quite unable to leave or to contact anyone. Of course, the priests who were in the interior, in the Catholic missions, went with the people into the bush. Then, after two or three years, we asked the priests to come back from the bush.

What was the role of the Indonesian troops after the "Timorization" of the war?

Of course, they were still involved in the fighting. But they did not want to come face to face with the FRETILIN soldiers, and they used the Timorese for this. They made it look as though Timorese were fighting Timorese. But the FRETILIN response was: "This is not a war between us but a war between Indonesia and Timor". So when there were encounters, the Timorese troops did not fight each other. The troops in the two Timorese battalions did not fight FRETILIN troops. So you see, although the Indonesians tried hard to cajole Timorese into fighting for them, giving them attractive things, money and so on, this was not successful. I know that many of the Timorese in the two battalions are very nationalist in spirit and will not fight against FRETILIN.

So, Timorization of the war started before the Operasi Keamanan of 1981?

Yes, in 1979. The Timorese battalions were required to take part in the 1981 operation, but the main forces used were the civilian population, and at a terrible

cost. It was during this Operasi that I was taken to Baucau to have a discussion with General Jusuf, the Armed Forces Commander. He sent a helicopter to Dili to meet him in Baucau. I had made it clear repeatedly that I absolutely did not agree with this Operasi. I met General Jusuf, with General Dading Kalbuadi and General Ali Murtopo. I told them that, in waging such a huge operation as this, they should have considered the cost in terms of food, medicine, transportation. The operations involved enormous distances and many, many people. I told these generals that people were dying in the streets from lack of food, because they were so weak. I also protested that even young boys from school had been forced to join the operations. I told them I was amazed such things had happened. He said he didn't believe it, but when he checked, he found that I was right. I told the generals that so much money must have been supplied for this operation, yet the people who were forced to take part were not being given any food; there was no medicine for them, no transportation. I was trying to hint that there had been a great deal of corruption, and all at the expense of the Timorese people. I didn't say it directly, but I think these generals understood what I was trying to say.

Was Operasi Keamanan a success for Indonesia?

No, not at all. On the contrary, it was counter-productive. They achieved nothing, absolutely nothing. It was counter-productive because the Timorese who were involved in the so-called fence-of-legs operations, ahead of Indonesian troops, warned FRETILIN fighters of Indonesian plans and helped them escape. And during the time of that operation and since, FRETILIN has continued to fight and get stronger. The Indonesians achieved nothing.

The operation also made the Timorese more anti-Indonesian than ever. So many people who came back from the operation were in a state of terrible physical exhaustion. They couldn't work in their fields and produce food. Because I could foresee what this would do to the level of food production, I sent a letter in November 1981 to the Australian Council of Bishops, warning of what could happen. During the three months of July, August and September, all the people, all males, from young boys to men in their fifties, were away on these operations. They returned home weak and exhausted. As a result, the fields were not prepared for planting new crops, which could seriously affect the next harvest. The planting period is at the beginning of November, but the fields have to be made ready well beforehand. Indeed, there was a shortage of food in those years, in 1981 and 1982.

What has been the effect of the Indonesian occupation on the level of food production?

You know, if the Indonesians were to allow Timorese people to move around freely and live where they like, there would be no shortage of food. Of course, food production is influenced by such factors as the climate. But the problem is that people are forced to live in the settlements and are not allowed to travel outside more than 5 kilometres. If they go farther than that, they will almost certainly be shot for trying to contact FRETILIN. This is the main reason why people cannot grow enough food.

When people discuss food in East Timor, they tend to consider only whether enough food aid is available. But surely that's not the point. Did the Timorese people suffer food shortages before 1975?

No, they didn't. Of course, occasionally some natural disaster, like a cyclone, would damage the harvest, but, generally speaking, there was enough food for people's basic needs. I must say people in Timor tend not to work harder than they need to satisfy their basic needs, but they didn't used to go short of food.

What about the livestock and the agricultural implements people need?

Buffaloes used to be very important to plough the soil for the cultivation of rice, but now almost no one has any buffaloes. Many buffaloes were killed in the war. In one place, a Catholic mission has some tractors, but this can only help a few people. Everywhere else, the work to prepare fields for rice cultivation is back-breaking because there are no buffaloes. Even the few tractors often break down, and without technical means, people cannot repair them. In former days, most peasants had buffaloes, or could borrow them from their neighbours for a small fee.

There is also a great shortage of agricultural tools, so people have to plough their fields with the help of a simple stick. That's very hard to do, very slow, and it produces very low yields.

FRETILIN was severely hit in 1978. How did it manage to restore fortunes after then?

Yes, that is quite extraordinary. There was a period when Xanana completely disappeared. The guerrillas were very worried because they didn't know what had happened to him. But - well, I can't explain all the details - he was helped by some people to get away for a few months, which gave him time to study and consider the situation very carefully. Then he came back and began to reorganize. They, all together, carried out a very good reorganization. In 1980, 1981 and 1982, they became very strong. Xanana took over leadership of the resistance immediately after the destruction of the red bases and the killing of Nicolau Lobato. Before, Xanana was the deputy chief, and he became commander when Lobato was killed. He showed great skill in reorganizing the resistance. It was a stunning blow when FRETILIN launched their attack on an installation in Dili in June 1980. No one could imagine where they had got their renewed strength from. In those days, in 1980, 1981, there were many rumours about secret meetings being organized by FRETILIN.

I must say I was deeply struck, reading the captured army documents, to see how the Indonesians admit that FRETILIN has been able to penetrate all the settlements, that they have bases and support groups absolutely everywhere. Were you aware of this when you were in East Timor?

Yes, I was. At first, I didn't notice anything; that was back in 1978. But then, little by little, we became aware that they were managing to penetrate everywhere, even right inside Dili. You can find FRETILIN people in all the offices, even at the highest level. There they are, even inside the Indonesian

armed forces. These are all clandestine of course. In his message to the FRETILIN External Committee, Xanana said that when people look for FRETILIN, they should realize that FRETILIN is everywhere. FRETILIN is the whole people. And I can tell you, that is absolutely true. Xanana said that the Indonesians go around asking where the FRETILIN people are. The truth is that they are everywhere, the whole people are FRETILIN. If the Indonesians want to kill off FRETILIN, they will have to kill off the whole people. I am convinced of that. They are so well organized that the leadership is informed about everything. Anything that happens in Dili gets passed on to Xanana immediately. They know everything.

How do you see this new offensive in terms of Indonesian policy?

I think it proves that Indonesian efforts at annexation have failed completely. I think that privately they know they have made a terrible mistake in trying to annex Timor; but they will never admit this publicly. The people of Timor simply refuse to be integrated. I have often said that if the people agreed with integration, I would go along with that, support it. But the converse is also true. If the people don't want to be integrated, if they want to be independent, we must do everything possible to help them. The Indonesians have made the terrible mistake of not being able to see this, and they are still making the same mistake. So they have to use violence to impose their will. It may be that with violence, they will achieve their objective; but it can only be temporarily, it cannot be a final victory.

You know, we all believe in God. He cannot support such efforts by people to use brute force and violence to impose their will on other people. It is my own feeling that people will pay in this world, too, for the wrongs they commit in this world. I am not against Indonesia, but I would like Indonesia to respect the right of the Timorese to be independent. They already have so many people and so many islands, more than 3,000. Why don't they look after all these other islands? Many of them are poor.

Why do you think Indonesia wants to annex East Timor?

It's a lot to do with egoism, wanting to prove how strong and superior they are. They have no sense of humility at all. With such terrible arrogance, they are blind to everything. They simply refuse to see that the era of imperialism is over. We can see this from history. We must not forget the lessons of history. The movement of history is towards independence. All people want to be independent. Indonesia must let the people of Timor have their independence.

What's your estimate of the number of Indonesian troops in East Timor?

About 20,000. I have received reports about this. And this number is certain to increase. Earlier this year, before they started with the preparations for this new offensive, they had about four battalions of troops, about 4,000 men, not including Battalions 744 and 745. The Indonesians don't trust these battalions, because the men in them are very nationalistic.

Do you see any difference between the morale of the troops?

Yes, very much so. The guerrilla troops are very different from the Indonesian soldiers. Why? Because they are fighting for an ideal, to achieve their own independence. So, whatever may happen to them, whatever sacrifice is required of them, they go on fighting. But the Indonesian soldiers are people who have been forced to come to Timor and fight. They haven't come there because they want to. And no one can say what they are fighting for. They have no morale. But FRETILIN's morale is high, very, very high. When they shed blood or think about dying for their cause, they are very proud, because they feel it is better to die than to live without our independence. Because of this, they feel that they are strong enough to fight anyone, absolutely anyone. The Indonesians fight because they are mercenaries; but the Timorese fight because we want to fight, because it is for the independence of Timor.

Have you found that some Indonesian troops are more ruthless than others?

The experience of Indonesian troops is that in their first encounters on the battlefield, they are very ruthless, but little by little they lose this. They get tired and fed up. Fighting in East Timor is very difficult for them. Sometimes they don't get enough food, they have to tramp in bad weather, cold, rain, with no transportation. And without any high morale, they very easily lose spirit altogether.

Do they have to rotate their troops very often?

Yes. Some of the troops really don't want to fight, because they recognize the right of the Timorese people to independence. They can see no reason for the war. You know, there have been incidents when whole companies of Indonesian troops, including their officers, have refused to fight when face to face with FRETILIN troops, have handed their weapons to FRETILIN and withdrawn. Many Indonesian soldiers were punished and sent to Bali for court-martial.

What do you know about the Kopassandha (RPKAD) troops?

We were told they are very good soldiers, but even they run away when confronted with FRETILIN troops. They are afraid, really afraid. Sometimes it's just enough for someone to shout, "Look out, FRETILIN troops! FRETILIN is coming!" for these troops to run away.

But the Indonesian troops have better weapons, don't they?

Yes, they do, but FRETILIN has captured many of these weapons, including automatic weapons, from the RPK and other troops. These soldiers are afraid, and they don't want to die. People often wonder how the resistance can survive. You should realize that they have many weapons as well. In the early days, they got their weapons from the old Portuguese colonial army - Mauzers, G3 rifles and so on. But now they have newer, better weapons - automatics, machine-guns, ammunition - all captured from the Indonesians.

Do you know whether Indonesia has used chemical weapons?

I don't know exactly. I have no experience in military technology, but I do know that sometimes, when bombs were dropped, they emitted a stream of fire which burns everything in its path, all the vegetation. Perhaps these were napalm bombs. I have seen the effects, but I can't classify the weapons.

The Indonesians have started bringing transmigrants to East Timor. What do you know about this?

In the beginning, I was informed by the military authorities about this. They said it would be good to bring some farmers from other parts to teach the Timorese about agricultural techniques. So, about 200 families were brought to Maliana from Bali. But they made a terrible mistake, because they settled these families on land that belongs to Timorese who were driven off the land. The Timorese were very angry, but, being powerless, they kept silent. They came and told me about it. They said they didn't mind if Balinese were brought there, but they can't forgive the Indonesians for driving them off their land for the transmigrants. There is plenty of other land they could occupy. "Why don't they go there?" these people said to me. So I brought these complaints to the attention of the Indonesian authorities, and they decided to stop the transmigration for the time being. I had told them that if they didn't stop doing this kind of thing, the FRETILIN might force them to stop.

Was the land given to the Balinese farmers handed back to the Timorese?

No it wasn't. And another problem is that these newcomers not only occupy the land of the Timorese. They also take over their jobs. These Balinese farmers are not familiar with the soil and didn't have much experience in agriculture, so they have taken other jobs - house-building, carpenting and other crafts. They are favoured against the Timorese, who have thus not only lost their land but have also lost various jobs they used to do. This has caused conflicts between the Indonesian peasants and the Timorese who have been thrust aside - the ones who have lost their land as well as the ones who have lost work.

I told the Korem officers in Dili that this is no good, either for the Timorese or for the Indonesians who come as transmigrants. This discrimination against Timorese is absolutely wrong.

Why do you think the western Governments have remained silent about the Indonesian invasion and annexation of East Timor?

I think the first reason is that these countries have strong trade links, huge investments in Indonesia. They are therefore afraid that if they criticize Indonesia they will damage these interests and lose the profits they can make from them. It is also my impression that the people in power pursue strongly materialistic motives which override any idealism or morality about human rights, although they speak about these things quite a lot. They are only concerned about the profits they can make, so they sacrifice principles for their materialistic motives.

What I can observe is that many people in the West are losing their sense of sin. Nothing seems wrong any more to them; everything is allowed. And when people lose their sense of sin, they lose their sense of God. We need God, because we are sinners. If people regard themselves as being super-human, they don't need God any more. That's a terrible thing.

Wouldn't that be true as well for the Indonesian soldiers in East Timor?

I don't see it like that. The soldiers do what they do because they are forced to; they are carrying out orders. But the authorities, the Government of Indonesia, they are the ones who are responsible for the killing of many hundreds of thousands of people in Indonesia, too, and the tens of thousands killed in East Timor. This is the sin of the Government.

Annex III

A. Excerpts of a report on the human rights and social and humanitarian situation in East Timor prepared and made public by the Revolutionary Council of National Resistance (RCNR)

In July this year, FRETILIN sent out a detailed 40-page report on human rights abuse and on social and economic conditions in the many strategic settlements scattered throughout the country.

Railaco, to the south-west of Dili

... hunger is severe. On 6 May this year, several columns of guerrillas passed through Faeisi, a district in Railaco; when they checked the huts, they found only enough dried manioc to last three months. The economic conditions are far worse than they were in 1976-1978, at the height of the military operations. There are no medical services for the people, and parents are preventing their children from learning Indonesian.

Likor/Lacio

... this is a concentration camp on the bank of the river Lado (east of Dili). Half the people here are suffering from illnesses and are in a physically weak state because of malnutrition. People lack decent clothing, their huts are often flooded ... The region used to produce rice, but today this is impossible.

Bazartete

... here people grow betel, copra and coffee, which helps them stave off hunger. But in March this year, taxes were imposed on these products for the first time, and people are also required to contribute one third of their output to finance the army's mopping-up operations. Only those who pay bribes to the Indonesian troops are permitted to take their coffee to Dili to sell it there./

Hatu Builico

... is a concentration camp on the road from Aimara to Aile, situated in the Ramelau Mountains. A crop of corn takes several months to grow. There is a severe lack of food, and during the periods of food shortage, the people go searching for wild plants. Everyone, including the women and children, are required to do forced labour. The huts with zinc roofs are occupied by Timorese who work for the colonial officials or members of hansip, but these huts have very thin walls. The huts where the rest of the people live are even worse, with roofs of straw or even just leaves.

Same: town and surrounding camps

... the only ones who still own some property and cattle are the civil servants, camats, bupatis, policemen, school directors and traditional chieftains. Most people have only manioc and potatoes to eat. This is a cold, hilly region, where corn grows slowly; any corn grown is sold to get cash to buy essential needs. During the hunger-crisis months, December to February, the people live from wild plants. At times of intensive agricultural activity (soil preparation, weeding and sowing) people are required to work on the land of the colonial authorities for nothing. It is called gotong-royong ... Strict control over the movement of the population and official decisions about which land may be cultivated - determined according to the needs of the war situation - has led to the abandonment of large tracts of land.

Betano

... is a concentration camp near the south coast about 10 kms from the town of Same. The soil here is good, but the people have only primitive agricultural implements, with the result that output is very low. The only livestock available belong to the landowners; if people want to borrow these to help till the land to grow rice, they must pay for it with their own labour. During the hunger-crisis months, people are required to do forced labour. Throughout the year, they are required to do one or two days' forced labour each week. During periods of intensive agricultural activity, they sometimes have to work one or two weeks at a stretch ...

Alas

... situated about 5 kms to the east of Same. Although two crops of corn can be grown here annually, conditions for the people are very poor because of the prevalence of mosquitoes and disease, for which no medical services are available. The physical conditions of the people keep corn production very low. Go into any hut and you will see that the people live mainly on sagu and an edible root, uhitrik, which they gather in the forests.

In We-susu, 5 kms south of Alas, conditions are better, because people can grow more corn and cassava. Yet here, too, there are periods of hunger when the people have to rely only on sagu.

Manatuto

... is on the north coast, east of Dili. The occupation of the population is growing rice, but output is far below pre-war because of the absence of livestock - most have been taken by the Indonesians - and also because of the greatly reduced area allowed for production as a result of the policies of the occupation forces. Some people can eke a living from fishing. Producing salt is a traditional activity in this region, but the areas where people are allowed to produce salt have been greatly reduced.

Kaelilo

... is the location of a camp, 2 kms south of Manatuto. Corn production here is better than elsewhere, but even so people produce only enough for three or four months; for the rest of the year they must depend on gathering wild plants, leaves and roots. Most people live in straw huts. Houses with zinc roofs have been built to impress outsiders, because they can be seen from helicopters ...

Laleia

... on the road to Baucau, 22 kms east of Manatuto. Conditions here are far worse than in Manatuto ... every hut is a centre of poverty and hunger. People produce corn and rice, but output is very low because of the lack of buffaloes. Things here have sharply deteriorated since "integration", which (the journalist) John Hamilton has labelled "a success story". The population is now concentrated around the town; and large areas formerly used for food production, such as Santo, Nan Rain, Rotuna, Segat, We Tiran, We Morem, Seram Baek, Kok Hoio, Samblai, Tissak Um, Beko, Lian Aen and Todos, have all been abandoned.

People work only with very primitive implements, which is all they now have. Even the privileged families associated with the colonial administration are badly off. People are in a constant state of hunger. Because of the severe lack of food, all nearby sources of sagu have been used up, people must go farther afield to find it.

Laklubar

... about 34 kms into the interior from Manatuto, approaching the central mountainous region. Conditions here are extremely bad, and people live mainly on the wine of palm trees and on potatoes or cassava. Because of the soil and climate, corn takes about nine months to ripen, and families can only produce three to four tins a year (1 tin = about 15 kgs). Starvation is therefore with the people all the year round.

Lacio

... about 20 kms south-west of Manatuto. Here, people can produce rice and corn, but they also gather sagu to supplement this. The yield of corn is better here than in Manatuto, and people can sell some of their produce so as to have cash for other needs. But many production areas had to be abandoned when the people were forced into the concentration camps. These abandoned regions were well-organized rice-production areas in Portuguese colonial days.

Tutuala

... is in the most eastern tip of East Timor. Famine here is chronic. The fundamental reason is the reduction of productive areas. Areas to the south, like Aleira Lafal, were rice-producing regions, but they are now under guerrilla control. People live mainly from cassava, a little fishing and a very small output of corn. The colonial administration has set up a "co-operative" run by the camat

and the Koramil officer; this is just a device for extracting taxes from the population. Death from starvation is a frequent occurrence here.

From Titilari to Los Palos

... conditions for the population who surrendered at the end of 1978 are far worse than for those who surrendered earlier. Security restrictions on their production areas are much tighter. People here are in a very weak physical state and are constantly hungry, so they have no energy to cultivate the soil properly or to go gathering edible roots and leaves. On occasion, people have been ordered to evacuate their homes for security reasons. This has happened mainly round Los Palos, when people have been forced out of their homes by armed troops and their huts then destroyed. When this happened, they had to live under the trees for some time before new huts were built. People live almost entirely off wild roots and coconuts; the death rate from starvation is high.

Muapitine

... people from here were transferred to Vailoro in mid-1982. Their only source of food in the new place is leaves and roots. Starvation is very serious.

Camps on the road from Ililopa to Lore

... People here did not surrender till the end of 1978, so their conditions are particularly bad and they suffer from very serious restrictions in the land available for food production. They, too, must rely on coconuts and wild roots. Many die of starvation.

Camps on the Laga-Saelari-Atelari road

Apart from some fields along the coast belonging to people who gave themselves up in 1976, the whole road to Atelari is inhabited by people who surrendered in 1979. In pre-war days and in the years from 1976-1978, rice production was plentiful around Laga, and corn and cassava were only grown to supplement this. Now, because of the very limited land available, people must search for wild roots to survive. About 70 per cent of the productive areas is under guerrilla control. Disease and death from starvation are widespread.

Maeran, and camps on the road from Poro to Assalaino

... Production areas are restricted to only between 200 and 500 metres from the camp boundaries because of security considerations, so there is little food to fend off starvation. Several pre-war productive regions are now abandoned. Output is very low because of this and also because people don't have any livestock.

Baguia

Although this is a show place with plenty of houses with zinc roofs, the people, in fact, live in conditions of starvation and disease. This is, in fact, one of the worst areas, because of the lack of land for food production and the tight security control. The death rate is high.

Uatokarabau

For those who surrendered in 1977, conditions are quite good, because they can till land near the coast. The majority who surrendered in late 1978 are subject to far greater security control. They possess very few animals, have little land to till and suffer severe starvation from December to March every year.

Uatolari

Formerly, this was an important rice-growing region, but today vast tracts of land have been abandoned. People don't have proper implements to till the land, only iron rods which make the work extremely hard and unproductive. Because corn and cassava output is so low, people gather edible roots and leaves. Many people are no more than skin and bone. The children and the elderly, in particular, display signs of advanced malnutrition and physical weakness. Many are ill, but medical facilities don't exist, except for those who can pay. Things are so bad today that it is certain many people will die of starvation. Considering that Uatolari used to be such an important rice-producing area, the claims of Mario Carrascalao, repeated by John Hamilton, that rice production in East Timor would reach 65,000 tons this year are patently absurd. The entire rice-producing area from Uatolari up to the Matabean Mountains is under guerrilla control.

Queliquai

There is a sharp contrast between the large number of people settled here and the very limited area of land available for food production. Recently, corn production has been resumed, which has improved things, but even so, the output is not enough for more than about three months. If it had not been for the cease-fire this year, which made more food production possible, about a thousand people would certainly have died of starvation. Most people are physically very weak, especially the young and the elderly. Huts with zinc roofs are visible from helicopters. They were built in May 1982, and until recently only Indonesian troops lived there. During the cease-fire, some local people were allowed to live in these huts, which had really been built only for propaganda purposes.

B. Forced labour in resettlement camps in East Timor

The practice of forced labour is now widespread in the resettlement camps which were set up in East Timor in the late 1970s as part of Indonesia's war strategy to isolate the resistance movement. Timorese people are being required to work without pay on land owned by Indonesian officials as well as on the land of more privileged Timorese (village and district heads, civil guard and Battalion 745 commanders). They also have to work on road construction, building houses and offices for the occupying forces, and to carry out timber-logging and cut down bamboo. In one area, people are required to work without pay on a state-owned sugar plantation in Ue Tice. Generally speaking, people are required to perform forced labour one day a week, but this is often extended as the "need" arises.

Food production critically low

In virtually all the camps, the level of food production is extremely low. Few peasants are producing rice any more, and most families are not able to produce more than about five or six tins of corn (a tin contains about 15 kilos) a year. In some places, production is down to only two or three tins a year. Beside the imposition of forced labour, low production levels are the result of the very limited amount of land available to the camp inhabitants, while at the same time, vast tracts of productive corn- and rice-producing land have been completely abandoned because of the enforced resettlement of the peasants. FRETILIN reports that fertile areas that have been abandoned include the upper reaches of the river Vemasse and a stretch of country extending 30 kilometres westward from the town of Laleia and southwards to Bibileu, including the fertile upper valley of the river Laleia. Further south, no fewer than 14 villages and regions to the west of Ossu and Viqueque have been abandoned, and further north, another 18 food-production regions are now going to waste.

Efforts to produce food on the land made available to camp inhabitants are severely hampered by the lack of agricultural implements and livestock. Few families now possess any buffaloes, except for the more wealthy, privileged Timorese families. Most implements are virtually beyond repair; yet people simply cannot earn the cash they would need to purchase new ones.

Crops burnt in advance of military operations

In early 1981, people living in the camps were suddenly ordered to gather in all their corn by April, regardless of the fact that it was not yet ripe. Nor was the time allowed anywhere near enough to complete the back-breaking task. Everything left standing in the fields after the time-limit had passed was burnt, causing a 30 per cent loss of crops. This was the time when preparations were under way for Indonesia's 1981 offensive, Operasi Keamanan. This year again, a similar order went out, requiring all corn to be gathered in before August, and warning people that anything left standing would be burnt. Once again, this destruction of crops can only be explained against the background of the preparations for the military offensive which was launched in August of this year.

The FRETILIN report about conditions in the camps is the first of its kind to be received from East Timor. It is an important record of the factors underlying East Timor's appalling food problem. The resettlement camps themselves are central to the problem, and as long as they remain in existence, famine will continue to threaten the people of East Timor.

Liberated areas of East Timor
Headquarters of RCNR, 25 July 1983